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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 1768
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 3594
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1319
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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/ANP, DRL/AWH
NSC FOR E.PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/14/2017

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SUBJECT: PAPUA -- GOI SLAPS CHARGES ON DETAINED ACTIVIST

REF: JAKARTA 3389 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Indonesian authorities have formally charged Papuan human rights activist Sabar Iwanggin with "inciting public hatred" via inflammatory SMS texts. No trial date has been set and his lawyer reports he is being treated well in prison. Mission continues to raise concerns about the case. There has been no public outcry so far, but the case's handling will no doubt deepen the general suspicion of Jakarta in Papua. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) ACTIVIST FACES TRIAL: On December 13, Indonesian authorities in Jayapura, Papua, formally charged detained human rights activist Sabar Iwanggin under Chapter 160 of the Penal Code for "Inciting Public Hatred." Iwanggin allegedly forwarded SMS messages that claimed President Yudhoyono was behind a plot to poison Papuans with tainted food. The messages accused non-Papuans living in the province of complicity in the plot. The police have transferred Iwanggin to Abepura Prison near Jayapura to await trial. He has been detained since mid-October. The charges were brought just before the 60-day legal deadline by which the government must move forward with a case, release the detainee, or request 30 more days to investigate (see reftel).

¶3. (C) Ecoline Situmorang--a lawyer working on Iwanggin's defense team--told poloff that Iwanggin's lawyers were preparing his defense. A date had not been set for his trial. Situmorang reported that Iwanggin was being treated well, and had frequent access to his lawyers and his family.

¶4. (C) FRANKLY, WE'RE CONCERNED: Reiterating Pol/C's expressions of concern made on December 13 and previously, poloff discussed the case December 14 with Wiwiek Setyawati of the Directorate of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs (DEPLU). She reported that DEPLU was following the case and understood USG concerns.

¶5. (C) Continuing, she commented that DEPLU had had difficulty getting information from the police about Iwanggin's case. She and other DEPLU human rights officials had recently returned from a mission to Papua to brief security officials there on Indonesia's obligations under international human rights agreement. It was her sense that progress on human rights was greater with the military and military courts than with the police and civilian courts

there.

16. (C) FALLOUT LIMITED (SO FAR): There is little doubt that Iwanggin's case will have political ramifications. Senior human rights lawyer and chair of the Papua Forum Albert Hasibuan told poloff that the decision to charge Iwanggin would likely deepen Papuans' already significant suspicion of the security services. While the SMS messages Iwanggin is alleged to have forwarded have circulated widely in Papua, Iwanggin is the only person charged in connection with them (and the SMS texts in fact did not apparently incite any specific anti-GOI activity). All of this is likely to trigger widespread public speculation that other motives were behind his arrest, according to Papua contacts.

17. (C) So far, however, there has been no public outcry. It is not clear how long this relatively muted response will continue. In any case, it is hard to see how this case and the relatively flimsy charges involved can help Jakarta's tricky relationship with the restive Papua region.

HUME